

GOSSIP AT A VILLAGE QUILTING.

By Lydia Jane Pierson.

"How beautiful! How mournfully beautiful!" said a fair young girl looking from a window along the quiet street. All eyes followed the direction of hers, and rested on an approaching chaise drawn by a grave sleek looking animal, who even seemed to tread lightly as if in consideration of those to whose comfort he was contributing. They were indeed a lovely couple, yet both were evidently invalids, for although it was a mild warm day in the early autumn, and the calash top of the chaise was thrown back for the benefit of the sun and air, the gentleman was wrapped in a cloak, and a heavy shawl muffled the person of the slender girl. He was a tall fine figure and his features were regularly handsome; his dark locks lay upon his temples like raven's plumes thrown upon a snow wreath, and his large black eyes sparkled as with the reflected light of glorious immortality. His companion sat beside him like a beautiful statue of delicately blue veined marble. Her soft brown hair lay in light natural ringlets on her neck and shoulders, and her azure eyes seemed overflowing with the tender sensibilities as she conversed with him beside her, and ever as she smiled, the bright rose spot on his cheeks flushed brighter, but her face was pale as the white lily.

"Poor young creatures!" sighed a bride of a few weeks when they had fairly passed. "They were to have been married on the same day that united me to Charles, but now their marriage ceremony will be the burial service. It is sad that they should die so soon, with love and happiness in full bloom before them, and they so worthy of life's dearest joys, so beautiful, and good."

They were always good and beautiful, I have known them from their infancy," observed a fine looking matron who was busily "laying out" the quilt. "I always thought that theirs would be no common lot. They were always together. He was a fine tall boy of his age, and she was sprightly as a fawn, and musical as a wild bird. How often have I heard her sweet songs ringing from rock to rock along the river. They knew the sunny knolls where the earliest violets blossomed, and the sheltered dells in which the last daisies lingered. They

never disturbed the bird's nests, but he would climb the tallest trees to get for her a handful of nuts, or a cluster of early ripe grapes.

"They loved every thing that was beautiful, and when weary of climbing the hills, or rambling in the forests, they would sit down in some pretty favorite spot, and while he read aloud, for he always carried some book with him, she would ply her needle at some fancy work, or sketch in a little blank book the surrounding scenery. Some of those wild sketches are wonderfully natural. And then he would coax her to sing some tender little song. Oh they were so gentle and so happy together!

"She was an angel of peace at home, at school, or at play. It seemed as if her loving presence excluded every angry passion. Everybody loved her: he was always with her. And so they went on until he was seventeen, when his father sent him away to school. I did expect then that Adela would pine like a bereaved ring dove, but she continued to look as sweet and smile as bright as ever. But it was observed that when she sat in their favorite bowers, her songs were wild pensive plaints which we were sure she had herself composed, and this was evidence that her heart was ill at ease. I knew that Edgar never could forget her, but I always thought they would never be married. As the autumn drew on I observed that the delicate rose tint had faded from her cheek, and I mentioned the circumstance to her mother. But she said that Adela's paleness came from lack of her usual exercise, as she seldom went out upon the hills now, although grapes and chesnuts were abundant I told her that I feared the lassitude of ill health kept her child from rambling, rather than that inactivity made her look ill. But she laughed at my fears, she could not believe that there was a canker in her fair rose. But she was to blame, for she allowed the girl to sit for hours in the evening air, gazing at the bright worlds floating in the blue ocean of immensity. Edgar came home at the holidays; and then I observed that although her eyes brightened to an unnatural lustre in his presence, her cheeks remained cold as snow, a sure sign that the links between soul and body were weakened, and the avenues of communication clogged by disease. The affection of the spirit was bright and strong as ever, but the body felt not the flow of its thrilling tides. Edgar's eyes were quicker than those of maternal love, or it may be that his heart felt the languor of her pulses, but he said that death

had touched her life strings. He could not be persuaded to the contrary, and he wept over her with a bitterness that blighted life's richest blossoms. He went back to college, but from that time they maintained a regular correspondence. I hope their letters will be preserved, as I am sure they are all worth reading.

"Well Adela continued to droop until all that remained of her former self was expression, the smile, the spirit of the eye, and the music of the voice. Yet she was not, and even now, is not greatly emaciated. People said she was only love sick, and would be well when Edgar came home to live, but I had seen too much to hope that. The strings of her life were attuned to too high a key; they are breaking by their own tension. This is evident from the keenness of all her sensibilities, and the affections that brighten as her life grows dim, and then she has neither pain, cough, or hectic. At length his term at college expired, and he set out for home on the pinions of impatience. Within a few rods of his father's gate the stage in which he travelled broke down, and although no other passenger received any injury, he ruptured a blood vessel, and bled so profusely that immediate death was apprehended. However, by skilful surgical aid he at length convalesced. During his period of danger Adela was ever near him. She seemed to know neither weariness or weakness until he was thought out of danger, then she was laid on her bed with a delirious fever. But that bedside was free from loathsomeness or terror, and the hallucinations of her mind were beautiful in the extreme. She must have been in heaven then, for her words were full of happiness and beauty, too exquisite for earth. Her fever turned at length, and the crisis terminated favorably. We now anticipated her restoration to perfect health, and for awhile she seemed full of joyful hope. But the prospect soon became overcast, Edgar experienced a relapse, and Adela drooped like a broken winged pigeon. He is now in a confirmed consumption, and his intervals of ease are few and brief. She is always with him, and her only care is to cheer his spirits, and alleviate his pain. 'T is beautiful to see her thus fondly sustaining her fellow traveller towards the grave. Last spring he was earnest in his wishes that she should be his wife for the little time that remained to them ; and although for a time she seemed willing, she at length persuaded him to relinquish the design, pleading that no legal ties could bind their spirits closer, and that their wasting bodies would soon become one mould in the grave. She is on the wing for heaven, and if he ever laments his

fate it is not when she is near him, with her sweet voice painting the blessedness of immortality with the light of Jehovah's presence ever filling the soul. And they have not long now to struggle with life."

"Poor young creatures !" ejaculated a young mother, as the speaker made a concluding pause; and her eyes rested tearfully on a fair babe that slept upon her lap; "'tis sad to die so soon."

" 'Tis sadder still," remarked one who was called a poetess, and whose intellectual countenance wore the chastening of sorrow; " it is sadder still to live when all our cherished hopes lie crushed around us; it is sadder to remain alone to weep over the grave of our early beloved ; it is sadder to walk mournfully day by day over the thorns that remain where the roses of our young affections perished. Methinks 'tis sweet to pass away thus in the bliss and purity of youth and love; before the bitter waters of reality have poured their scalding currents on the heart. They will never know the agony of repulsed or slighted affection; or the rankling of that passion which is cruel as the grave; they will escape the many pangs of life which are keener than the dart of death, and which strike once and again, and leave the heart alive and writhing. Oh who should withhold those who stand on the threshold of heaven!"

"If my poor George and I could have died in our young happiness, when we were blest with friends, and wealth, and love!" murmured a woman who sat by herself at the lower end of the quilt, and whose clean cap and dress were of a quality that denoted poverty; "if we had died then he would not have gone down unhonored to the drunkard's grave; nor should I have lived to toil day and night for that tear steeped bread which merely preserves my despised little ones from starvation. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for they rest from their labors."

"Well, after all, life is sweet," cried the buxom wife of a thriving farmer, who though scarce thirty, already numbered eight children. " Surely the old people who sit with their children and grandchildren, surrounded by comforts gathered by their own industry, have no reason to wish they had died young.

The Bible everywhere teaches that long life should be considered a blessing."

"The ways of Providence are often wrapped in mystery," observed a solemn looking lady. "He snatches one from the midst of all life's blessings and honors, and suffers another to drag on a long life of suffering and infamy ; it is vain to search for his motives, he does as it pleases him, and although his dealings may appear like cruelty, we shall doubtless one day acknowledge that they were just."

"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" quoted a plainly dressed woman, whose placid brow looked as if neither sorrow, care, nor discontent, had place beneath it. "However mysterious his dealing may appear, his children feel that he is supremely merciful. All that we have need of is a living faith ! Once possessed of that, we feel that for us to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

At this point of the conversation tea was announced and the quilters adjourned.